



Small Acts of Resistance

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Small Acts of Resistance

The concept of 'everyday resistance' is beneficial when considering David Blackmore's work. Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* argues that everyday resistance is a matter of 'tactics' that involves being mobile and opportunistic, using systems and the order of things for one's own means, where 'order is tricked by an art'.

We can act in oppositional ways through the reuse and re-appropriation of rituals and representations in both the public and personal realms which run counter to power and regulatory factors determining social behaviour, context and situation at any time. Michel Foucault famously said 'Where there is power, there is resistance'. and individuals through small everyday acts can undermine power in hidden, individual and not politically articulated ways. De Certeau argues that although the public realm may be strategically designed in a unified way, the walker and other 'arts of doing' can navigate the city in tactical ways to circumvent and resist organising institutions and systems. And this spontaneous and opportunistic impulse of acting and being is a central component in Blackmore's practice.

Although educated through the mechanical and critical discourses of Photography, Blackmore has described himself not as a photographer but as 'a nomad moving between sculpture, installation, walking and utilising appropriated objects'. Blackmore's acts, interventions and observations within the public realm can be seen as those of the trickster, who makes strange both the familiar and disregarded aspects of civil life and the urban terrain.

Euronation (2002) is evidence of what seems to be (depending on your point of view) a performative action or an act of vandalism, on a series of post boxes from across Dublin in the Republic of Ireland and Epsom in the UK. These functional and symbolic objects in the public realm are relics of the late 19th century that in the UK bear the hallmark Crown of the British Royal Family. Traditionally these are

always painted red across the UK and painted green in the Republic of Ireland. In the work we see the before and after documentation, of post boxes now transformed blue by the artist's spray can intervention. The work coincided with and sought to comment on the withdrawal of the Irish punt and the introduction of the Euro in 2002. *Euronation* initiates a conversation about European identity, and its intersection with Irishness and Britishness.

www.europeanpa55port.com (2016) as an artwork is a website and follows similar concerns. It was in response to a formal request Blackmore had made in February 2016 for a non-nation specific European passport, in return for which he was willing to revoke his Irish and British citizenship. The request was denied 'because such a passport does not exist'. In response to this reply Blackmore removed the national emblems from both his Irish and British passports. The work is the trace evidence of these actions and requests.

Euronation and *www.europeanpa55port.com* also plays on what Philip Auslander terms the 'Performativity of Documentation' where the pleasure of the documentation for the spectator can supersede the need to have witnessed any real or imagined original event. Blackmore's work through photographic documentation captures traces of live actions and intervention for future witnesses in other locations.

There is a central compulsion within Blackmore's work to observe the alienation of the subject within the authoritative structures and ordering systems of the nation state and modern capitalist society. Section 76 of the *Counter Terrorism Act* (2008) was made in response to an act of law passed in the UK in the same year which made it an offense to elicit, publish or communicate information about members of the security forces. These are small and what seem like impromptu and covert photographs of police officers taken on a mobile phone, which have then been used to make an eightfold book. Although his distorted and grainy images fail to capture

the officer's identities and the work becomes another gesture against authority.

In *Disposable*, (2009 – present) each time Blackmore visits a new place he purchases a disposable camera which he uses to make images en-route and while there. When all the images had been exposed he would find a quiet space beside a tree and bury the camera in the soil as well as leaving an 'X' on a tree. These cameras remained buried until when or if he returned through necessity or by invitation. This time the act of defiance seems directed at photography itself and its role in documenting place although the growth of the trees and the abstract property of the images make for a risky recovery strategy.

Across these projects Blackmore is leveraging possibilities, gaps and spaces in institutions and systems to allow alternative routes, shortcuts and passageways. And although these paths might lead us nowhere they are opportunities all the same.

Cherie Driver